Kumar Panja, a wide range of issues such as the nuclear issue including CTBT, the situatin in Pakistan, continuation of dialogue in various fields including defence, culture, economic cooperation and trade, Wisemen's Committee and Parliamentary Friendship Association were discussed.

This year, Foreign office Consultations were held on February 14 at the level of the Foreign Secretary of India and Deputy Foreign Minister of Japan. The 30th meeting of the India-Japan Business Cooperation Committee was held on January 31-February 1. A Friendship Exchange Committee's Economic Mission visited India (February 27—March 5) to promote understanding. The first round of India-Japan Energy talks was held on March 7. The fourth round of MEA-MITI Dialogue was held on March 28, 2000. The 10th meeting of the Mixed Cultural Commission is likely to be in May/June. Apart from this, talks at Commerce Secretary level and Security dialogue have also been planned. Former Prime Minister Hashimoto visited India on February 20—22 2,000 to deliver a keynote speech at a conference organised by Tata Energy Research Institute.

The Japanese Minister for International Trade & Industry Takashi Fukaya is scheduled to visit India on May 4-5, to hold talks with Minister for Commerce & Industry.

British Foreign Secretary's India Visit

4161. SHRI ABANI ROY : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the British Foreign Secretary has recently paid a visit to India and held discussions on many issues;

(b) if so, the details of discussions and outcome thereof;

(c) whether UK Government have agreed to provide help to India to face the problems of cross border terrorism and funding of militants and also to strengthen defence ties; and

(d) if so, the terms and conditions fixed in providing such help?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Yes, Sir. Mr. Robin Cook, British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, visited India from 15—18 April 2000.

(b) The discussions contributed to an enhanced understanding on bilateral issues as well as on developments in India's neighbourhood, non-proliferation and disarmament, international terrorism, the forthcoming meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group and the India-EU Summit. Both sides reiterated their commitment to strengthening bilateral trade and commerce to achieve a target of 5 billion over the next two years. It was agreed to initiate in the year 2001, a formal, structured bilateral dialogue between senior officials on issues pertaining to non-proliferation and disarmanent. Mr. Cook publicly stated that the U.K. sees India 'as a natural contender for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council'. During the visit, India and the U.K. inaugurated the high-level, non-governmental India-U.K. Round Table, which has been constituted recently to advise the Governments of India and the U.K. on ways of enhancing and enriching the bilateral relationship.

(c) and (d) India and the U.K. have been cooperating both bilaterally and in multilateral fora to address the problem of cross-border terrorism and funding of terrorist activities through the India-U.K. Extradition Treaty and the Agreement for Investigation and Prosecution of Crime, Tracing, Restraint and Confiscation of Proceeds and Instruments of Crime and Terrorist Funds. the ongoing cooperation would be further strengthened under the provisions of the Terrorism Bill, which is being discussed by the British Parliament. On defence relations India and the U.K. have been working towards strengthening the defence ties through the India-U.K. Defence Consulative Group, which was established in March 1995. The Group facilitates a mutual understanding of each other's strategic and security interests, and cooperation through exchange of visits and linkages between defence industries and training institutions of the two countries.

India's role on the Security issue of Gulf Region

4162. SHRI PARMESHWAR KUMAR AGARWALLA : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Information and Culture Minister of United Arab Emirates during his recent visit to India said that India should not distance itself from the security issue of the gulf region; and

(b) if so, in what manner India can play a strategic role in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) : (a) Yes.